



Design and Access Statement

Ford Oaks Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility

Taiyo Power & Storage Ltd

CRM.3025.001.PL.R.002



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Design and Access Statement

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Drawings

Drawing Reference	Drawing Title
CRM3025.001.PL.D.001 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Location Plan
CRM3025.001.PL.D.002 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Planning Boundary (Reception Site)
CRM3025.001.PL.D.003 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Planning Boundary (Main Site)
CRM3025.001.PL.D.004 (Planning Drawing)	Field Reference Plan
CRM3025.001.PL.D.010 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Development Plan (Reception Site)
TPS FO 001 001 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Development Plan
TPS FO 001 002 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Development Plan (Northern Fields)
TPS FO 001 003 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Development Plan (Southern Fields)
TPS FO 001 004 (Planning Drawing)	Proposed Development Plan (Eastern Fields)
TPS FO 001 005 (Planning Drawing)	Construction Phase Plan (Northern Fields)
TPS FO 001 006 (Planning Drawing)	Construction Phase Plan (Southern Fields)
TPS FO 001 007 (Planning Drawing)	Construction Phase Plan (Eastern Fields)
Contained within Ecological Report	EMMP (Northern Fields)
Contained within Ecological Report	EMMP (Southern Fields)
Contained within Ecological Report	EMMP (Eastern Fields)
LOA1001 214D (Planning Drawing)	Fence & Security Gate Section Details
LOA1001 214D I (Planning Drawing)	Fence & Fence Gate Section
CRM3025.001.HY.D.012 (Contained within FRA)	Drainage Plan
DV5045.PD-10 (Contained within Transport Statement)	Proposed Construction Phase – Access & Internal Roads
035.220	Landscape Plan

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared to support a full planning application by Taiyo Power & Storage Ltd for the construction and operation of a combined ground mounted Solar (c.29ha) & Green Infrastructure (c.45ha) Facility on land to the west and south of Marsh Green near Exeter, EX5 2EU.
- 1.1.2 The proposed development will provide renewable energy, from species-rich grassland, equivalent to the c.37,000MWh consumed by 18,500 homes across the EX5 2 postcode area in 2020.
- 1.1.3 The scheme also presents extensive green infrastructure of woodland, wet meadow, stream and hedgerow ecological habitat and corridor enhancements and landscape planting across the site and is aiming to be the first Solar Scheme in the UK which successfully achieves the Building with Nature accreditation. The Net Biodiversity Gain is projected to be 121%.
- 1.1.4 This Design and Access statement has been prepared as part of a suite of documents to support a full planning application. The DAS should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Planning Statement which sets out the planning policy context for the application.
- 1.1.5 This document has been prepared in line with section 4(3) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendments) Order 2013, which sets out the requirements regarding the contents of a Design and Access Statement.
- 1.1.6 The dual objectives of the development are to provide a clean, renewable, and sustainable form of electricity that will make a valuable contribution to the generation of renewable electricity *and* transform a valley of grazed grassland and improved arable fields and a poached stream to a valley of enhanced and new biodiverse wildlife habitats, with waters retained within a series of passive drainage assets. The scheme will assist in the Council's ambitions to address the climate and nature emergencies whilst following the guiding principles of Devon's green infrastructure strategy.
- 1.1.7 Planning Permission is sought for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of first exportation of electricity from the site.
- 1.1.8 The Planning Application also includes a construction traffic reception Compound which is required for a temporary period of 1 year. It is approximately 1.26 hectares in area and will be used for the assembling of construction traffic (prior to escorted convoy to the development site). The only temporary building on this site will be the welfare and reception office.

1.2 Climate Change Emergency

- 1.2.1 The April 2022 Energy Security Strategy announced both a 2030 ambition of a four-fold raising of UK installed solar power from 14GW to 70GW; and a consultation to change Planning Policy to be more in favour of ground and roof mounted solar energy installations.
- 1.2.2 In October 2021 the Government published the Net Zero Strategy which sets out the government's strategy for progressing to net zero. **This includes the targets that by 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean energy.** Solar energy will be a critical strand to achieve this ambitious target.

- 1.2.3 On the 10th July 2019, East Devon District Council declared a 'climate emergency' in recognition of the need to take urgent action in respect of climate change. The Council published a Climate Change Action Plan (2020-2040), which included aspirations to become a net-carbon neutral authority.
- 1.2.4 A national climate change emergency was declared by the UK Parliament in May 2019. On June 27th, 2019, the UK Parliament approved the net zero target in law, thereby changing the original target of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990) in the UK to 2050 to 100%.
- 1.2.5 The International Policy Framework recognises the urgency in significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Kyoto Protocol, 2005) and the UK, along with other EU countries, has signed up to the EU Renewable Directive. The Directive stated that 80% of the UK energy consumption should be generated from renewable energy by 2050.
- 1.2.6 Whilst the increased world focus on renewable clean energy is being recognised now more than at any other time, recent world events and ever-increasing energy costs have further highlighted the need for a security of a local energy supply.
- 1.2.7 The proposed development seeks to provide renewable energy which will make a step towards achieving local low carbon renewable energy.

1.3 Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 1.3.1 The Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out the following guiding principles for development in Devon:
- Planning for green infrastructure at the outset;
 - Ensuring Resilience in water and flood management;
 - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity;
 - Conserving, enhancing and strengthening links with Devon's landscape;
 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment;
 - Enabling access, fitness and contact with nature;
 - Securing Local Food Supply; and,
 - Responding to Climate Change.
- 1.3.2 The proposed development has been designed to follow these guiding principles and address the objectives identified in the Strategy.

2.0 Site and Setting

2.1 Site Analysis and Context

- 2.1.1 The site is located approximately 6.5km east of Exeter to the west and south of Marsh Green in East Devon at postcode EX5 2EU and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 303651, 93483 (site boundary plan CRM.3025.001.PL.D.002).
- 2.1.1 The construction traffic Reception Compound is located on land off Bishop's Court Lane, Clyst Honiton in East Devon at postcode EX5 2HN (centred at grid reference SX 99063 93002), to the immediate south of Exeter airport (reception boundary plan 3025.001.PL.D.003).
- 2.1.2 The Red Line Boundary Plan (ref CRM.3025.001.PL.D.001) identifies the proposed development areas to the east and the reception area to the west.

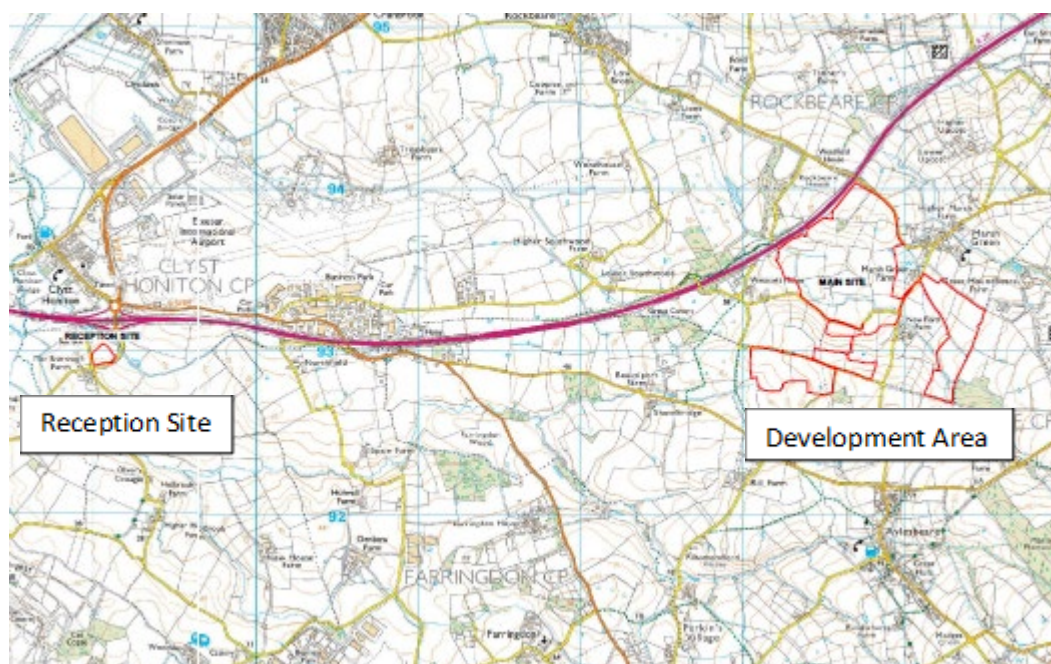


Figure 2.1: Site Location

- 2.1.3 The development site is approximately 74 hectares and consists of agricultural field parcels which all feature hedgerow boundaries interspersed with, mainly oak and ash trees; all of which will be retained.
- 2.1.4 The proposed development consists of approximately 74 hectares of land which consists of:
- c.29 hectares of fenced solar arrays with species-rich grassland, plus associated infrastructure (such as transformers, substations and internal roads both inside and outside the fenced land parcels);
 - c.26 further hectares of enhanced species-rich grassland and stream habitats within the fences;
 - c.19 hectares of dedicated woodland, wet meadow, stream and hedgerow ecological habitat and corridor enhancements and landscape planting; outside the fences yet within the development boundary.

- The Proposal also includes a consultation regarding a proposed community fund whereby community groups could apply for funding of community led projects.

2.1.5 The red line of the main development area is outlined in figure 2.2 below.

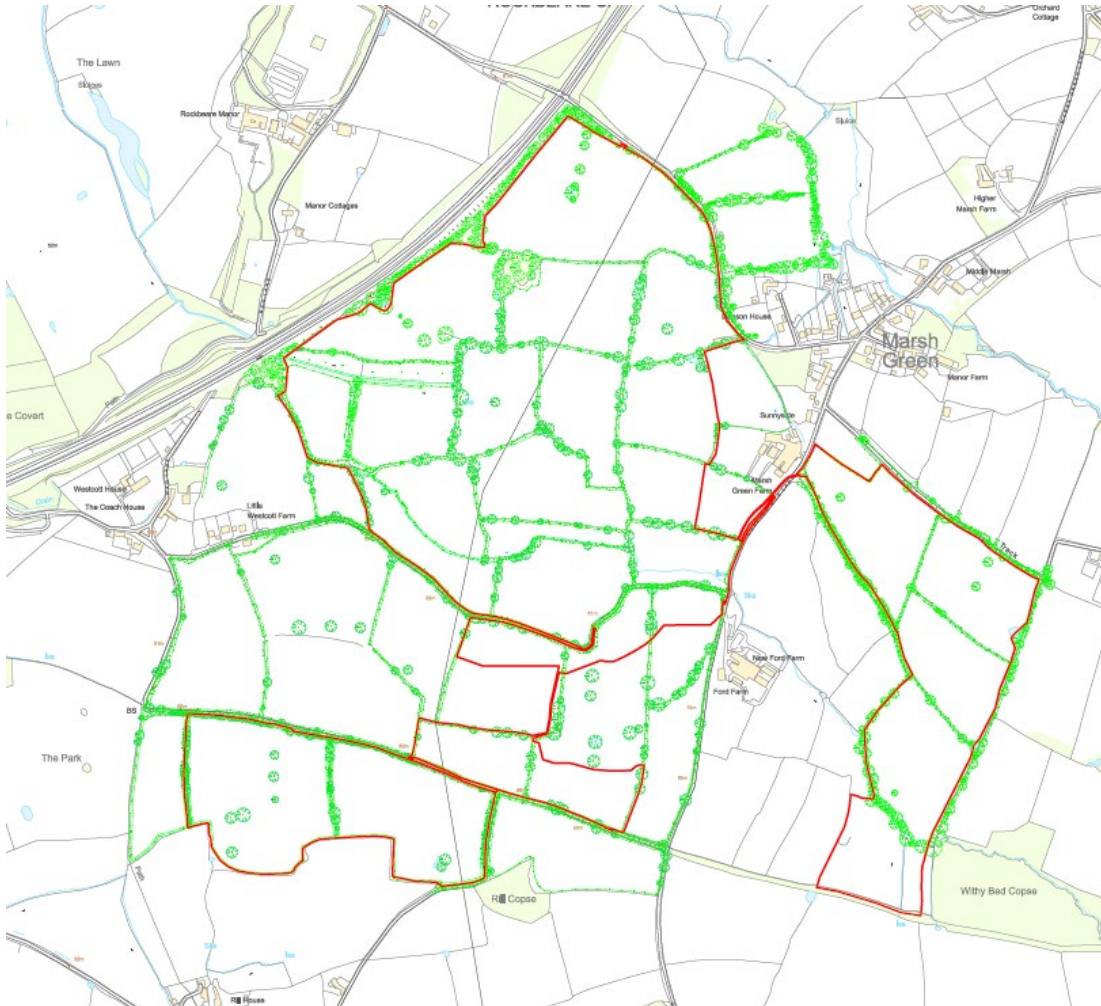


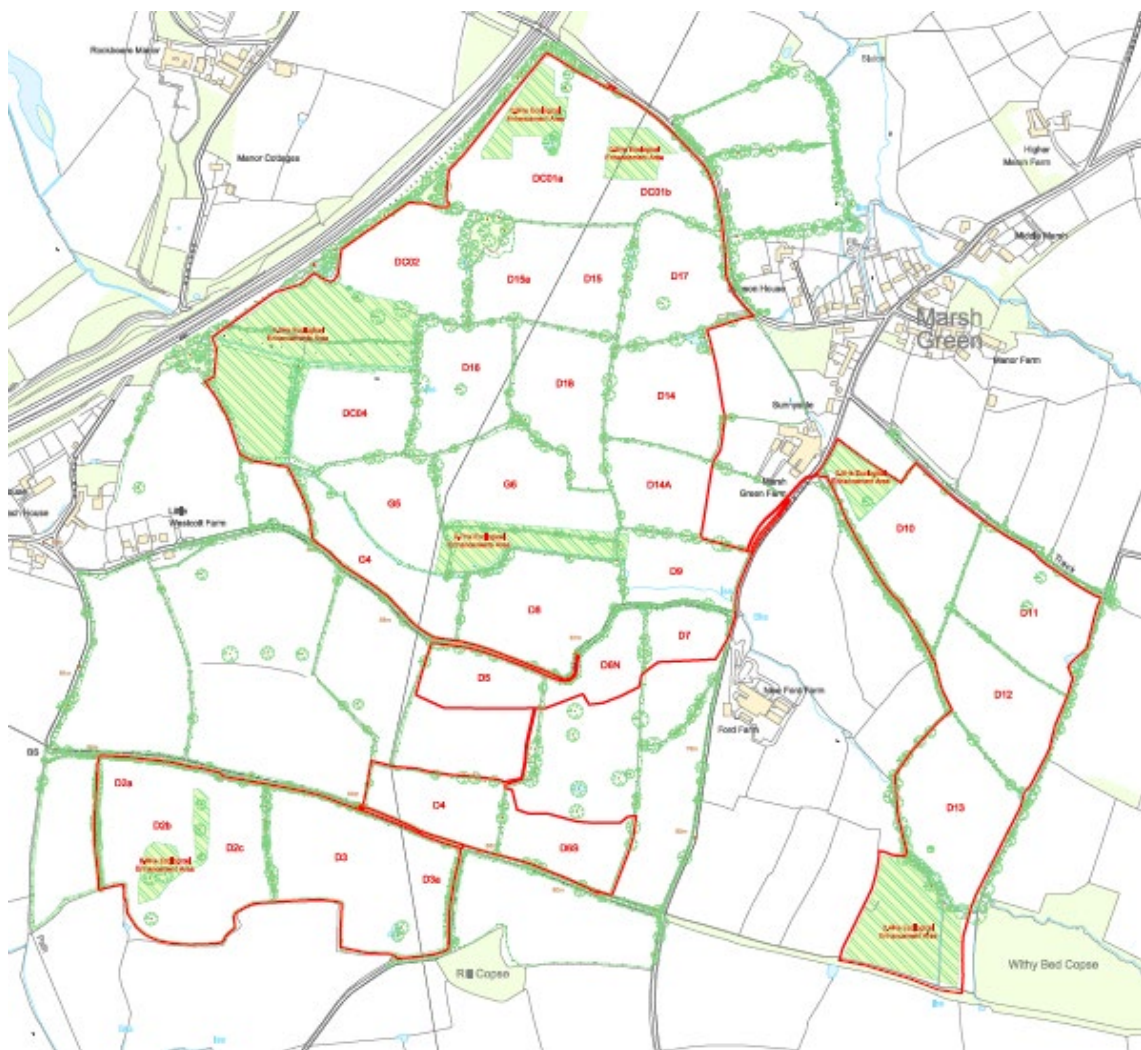
Figure 2.2: Development Area Redline Boundary

- 2.1.6 The development site is comprised of a shallow valley, rising in the north towards the A30, dropping towards a water course 'Ford Stream' in the middle of the site just north of Westcott Lane, before rising to the southern land parcels.
- 2.1.7 The A30 forms the northern and western boundary of the site, creating a strong urbanising influence on the wider landscape; however, mature trees and hedgerows screen much of any potential visual impact from the A30 dual carriageway, Rockbeare Manor and the Air Traffic Control Tower at Exeter Airport. Additionally, large electricity pylons bisect the site from north to south, further detracting from the rural character of the site. Noise from the A30 is pervasive across the site.
- 2.1.8 The nearest settlements to the site are the small hamlet of Westcott, located immediately to the west of the site and the village of Marsh Green which borders the site to the northeast. Aylesbeare is circa 0.75km to the south of the site. To the east, the settlement edge of West Hill is circa 2km from the site boundary beyond which is the larger settlements of Ottery St

2.1.9 Rockbeare Manor, a grade II listed building and registered park and garden, separated from the site by the A30, approximately 0.5km north of the development. The East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty sits approximately 1.2km to the east of the development site.

2.1.10 Immediately west and east of the southern land parcels are County Wildlife Sites at Beautiport Farm and Withybed Copse.

2.2.1 The development footprint has been split up into 3 proposed development areas (for ease of reference) and a temporary construction traffic Reception Compound. The figure below illustrates the different field numbers.



2.2.2 The following section briefly describes each field parcel.

Northern Area

- 2.2.3 The northern area is located to the south and east of the A30 dual carriageway and north of Westcott Lane. The eastern boundary is bordered by Quarter Mile Lane and the hamlet of Marsh Green. The western boundary consists of agricultural fields and the hamlet of Westcott.

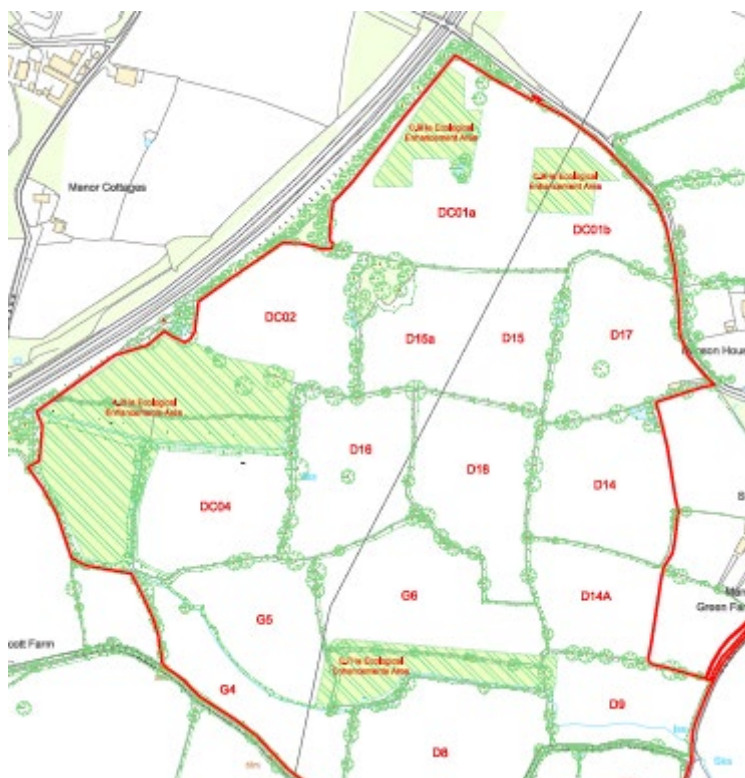


Figure 2.4: Northern Fields

- 2.2.4 The Northern Area Consists of approximately 16 fields which are referenced below:

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
DC01	<p>This is a large open field used as agricultural land bordered by hedgerows interspersed with trees. To the west and north is the A30 dual carriageway. Rockbeare Lane, serving Marsh Green crosses over the A30 just to the north of the field and continues south-east and forms the north eastern boundary of the field.</p> <p>The field is divided into 2 areas. DC01a is adjacent to the A30 and a larger area DC01b lies to the east. There is a line of 4 trees crossing the field that demark the boundary between DC01a and DC01b.</p> <p>A large steel pylon sits in DC01b and dominates the plateau ridge and view over the A30 bridge travelling to Marsh Green. High voltage electricity cables cross field</p>	Access to the field is via a gateway off Rockbeare Lane.	1:34 to 1:44

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
	<p>DC01b from NNE to SSW and extend south through fields D15, D16, G6, G5, G4, D5, D4 and D3.</p> <p>Access onto the field is via gate off the Rockbeare Lane to the north approximately 125m from the bridge over the A30, where there are overhead power cables.</p> <p>Another line of overhead power cables run along the hedgerow on the south side of DC01b lead down to field DC02 and DC03.</p> <p>A wooden telegraph pole is present at the field gate access.</p>		
DC02	<p>This field lies adjacent to the A30 dual carriageway and immediately to the south-west of DC01a. The agricultural land is bordered largely by hedgerows interspersed with trees. There is coppice covering an area of about 0.3ha at the north-east corner of the field and a broken line of mature trees runs through the centre of the site.</p> <p>Two overhead powerlines cross through the west and south side of the field. The former runs south between fields DC03 and DC04 and then along the west side of field D2b.</p>	Access from DC01.	1:15
Grassland wet strip	Between DC02 and DC03 there is a strip of wet grassland, under which run field drains.	Access outside the fence via DC01 and DC02	-
DC03	<p>This field is damp pasture and is surrounded by hedgerow interspersed with mature trees. It is separated from DC02 by a 30m wide strip of grassland</p> <p>There are 2 overhead power cables fringing the north and east boundaries of the field.</p>	Access is from Rockbeare Lane, outside the western DC01 & DC02 perimeter fence.	1:60 to 1:75
DC04	<p>This field is pasture grassland offset from DC02 by a 40m wide strip of grassland. The other field boundaries are defined by hedgerow and mature trees.</p> <p>There is a line of overhead power cable along the west field boundary next to DC03.</p>	Access to the field is through DC02.	1:43
D8	The field is used as pasture grassland bordered by mature hedgerows and interspersed mature trees.	The construction and decommissioning access gate is off Westcott Lane;	1:51

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
		the operation access is through field D9.	
D9	This pasture field is used for grazing with Ford Stream flowing through the middle of the field from under Quarter Mile Lane westwards. The field has a mature hedgerow and tree belt along its southern boundary. The western and northern boundaries consist of hedgerow whilst the eastern boundary is a mature high hedgerow bordering Quarter Mile Lane.	Access gate off Quarter Mile Lane about 400m south of Marsh Green.	1:39
"Pistol"	A narrow east-west oriented paddock north of D8, west of D9, East of G5 and south of G6. A pasture field used to graze livestock. Ford Stream flows along east to west at the base of the southern hedgerow.	Access gate from D9	1:51
D14	This area encompasses old field boundaries to the west of Marsh Green Farm which comprise pasture grassland. Mature hedgerows and trees exist in parts around and across the site.	Construction and decommissioning access is through an existing field gate on Quarter Mile Lane and through Marsh Green farmyard. Maintenance access is from D17 and D18.	1:21 to 1:26
D15	This field is pasture grassland surrounded by mature hedgerow interspersed with trees. There is a coppice at the north-west of the field adjoining fields DC01a and DC02a. A large steel pylon exists near the boundary between D15 and D15a dominating the skyline on this northern ridge of the valley and high voltage power cables cross the field from NNE to SSW. A second overhead power line crosses at the north-west corner of the site near to the coppice.	The access is from DC01.	1:14 to 1:30
D16	This field is pasture grassland and lies south of field D15a and east of DC04. It is surrounded by mature hedgerows and with a tree belt along the western hedgerow. There is an oak tree in the centre of the field. The overhead high voltage power lines cross over the south-east corner of the field.	Access is via D15	1:34
D17	This field is bounded by Rockbeare Lane road to the east and DC01b to the north, and D15 to the west. It	During the construction phase the gated	1:17

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
	is pasture grassland bordered by mature hedgerows interspersed with trees. There is an oak tree within the field. Overhead power lines fringe the north-west corner of the field.	access to this field will be temporarily blocked and the site accessed from D15. Once operational the gated access will be reinstated and used only for the maintenance of the swale and landscape screening planting.	
D18	This pasture grassland field is south of D15, west of D14 and east of D16, surrounded by mature hedgerows interspersed with occasional mature trees	The field is accessed via D16	1:34
G4	This area is an elongated field immediately to the north of Westcott Lane. It is grassland for livestock and is surrounded by a hedgerow with a few trees on the west and east boundaries. It abuts field G5 where there is a watercourse (Ford Stream). Various tracks cross the area leading from a field entrance at the south-west corner. High voltage overhead power cables cross the valley bottom from north to south passing through the east part of the field.	Access gate off Westcott Lane	1:23
G5	This field is pasture grassland and lies immediately north of field G4. A mature hedgerow exists along the north and east sides of the field with a few trees. There is a shallow ditch, Ford Stream and field G4 beyond to the south. There is a high electricity steel pylon which dominates the valley bottom and high voltage power cables pass across the valley north to south passing over the hedgerow and gateway between fields G5 and G6. A well-used livestock track crosses the field from an access point through the hedgerow about the middle of the east boundary	Access along the northern hedgerow from G4.	1:41
G6	This field is pasture grassland and is surrounded by mature hedgerows and a few interspersed trees. There is a large steel pylon near the middle of the west side of the field which dominates the valley and overhead high voltage	Access from G5	1:35

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
	power cables extend south along the boundary with field G5. Livestock tracks cross the field from a gate at the south-west corner of the field to the middle of the west boundary with G5.		

Table 2.1 – Northern Area

Southern Area

2.2.5 The Southern Area is located to the south of Westcott Lane and includes the field parcels which lie to the north and south of Withybed Lane. Further south are a number of agricultural fields and farmhouses.

2.2.6 To the east is Quarter Mile Lane and agricultural fields, whilst the western boundary consists of an agricultural field, beyond which is Public Right of Way which can be accessed off Withybed Lane.



Figure 2.5: Southern Field Parcels

2.2.7 The Southern Area consists of 6 fields which are referenced below:

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
D2	The field is pasture grassland to the south Withybed Lane. The field is surrounded by mature hedgerows and trees. There are a few trees within the field that possibly indicate a former old field boundary. A hollow exists in the south-west of the field. Power cables cross the west side of the field.	The gate off Withybed Lane.	1:13 and 1:24

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
	<p>A disused barn is located adjacent to the Withybed Lane gateway.</p> <p>There gateways under the power cables at the north-west corner of the field from field D1 and also leading into field D3 parallel with the adjacent Withybed Lane.</p>		
D3	<p>The field is agricultural land bounded to the north by Withybed Lane.</p> <p>It is bordered by mature hedgerows and trees and there is a small coppice and pond in the southeast of the field.</p> <p>A large steel pylon dominates this southern ridge from the SE corner with the high voltage power cables running North-South across the east side of the field.</p>	<p>The construction phase welfare area access gate is at the north-east corner of the field from Withybed Lane.</p> <p>Operational access is from D2.</p>	1:16 and 1:32
D4	<p>This field comprises pasture grassland to the north of Withybed Lane, opposite to field D3. It is bordered by hedgerows and a few trees along its north and east sides.</p> <p>There is a high electricity steel pylon just beyond the north field boundary which dominates the skyline from the valley below and overhead power lines extend north across the valley and South along the west hedgerow of the field.</p> <p>A well-used livestock track crosses field diagonally from a gated entrance at the south-west corner leading to a gate in the southeast corner into D6.</p>	Access gate off Withybed Lane.	1:12 to 1:20
D5	<p>This field consists of pasture grassland bordered by hedgerows and a few trees to the south and east. Westcott Lane is adjacent to the north field boundary. There is a gated track from the lane onto the field. There is a gateway into the lower part of D6 on the east boundary.</p> <p>There is an electricity pylon in the south-west corner of the site and overhead power cables extend north near the west field boundary.</p>	The access into the field is through the gate from D6N.	1:14
D6	<p>This field is used as pasture grassland lies to the east of field D5. It is bounded by hedgerows and a few trees.</p> <p>The northern parcel has a gate in the eastern hedge into D7 and a gate in the NE corner onto Westcott Lane – in front of which a connecting hedge will be planted PRIOR to construction.</p> <p>The southwest corner of the field has a gate with field D4 whilst the southeast corner gate is onto Withybed Lane</p>	The northern field parcel is accessible (construction and operation) from D7 and the southern field parcel	1:11

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
		from Withybed Lane (construction phase only) and from D4 during operation.	
D7	<p>This field lies to the south of Westcott Lane and west of Quarter Mile Lane about 600m south from Marsh Green. It is used as pasture grassland and bordered in part by hedgerows and trees. A mature hedgerow crosses the field from north to south.</p> <p>There is a well-defined livestock track from the junction of Westcott Lane and Quarter Mile Lane at the north-east corner of the field that crosses the mature hedgerow near the middle of the field.</p>	The access gate at the junction of Westcott Lane and Quarter Mile Lane..	1:19 to 1:26

Table 2.2 – Southern Area

Eastern Area

- 2.2.8 The Eastern Area of land is located to the east of Quarter Mile Lane and west of Houndbeare Lane (and solar facility).
- 2.2.9 The northern extent consists of drover's road which starts south of the village of Marsh Green.
- 2.2.10 The southern extent consists of a second drovers road, whilst further south is Withybed Copse and Withybed Lane.



Figure 2.6: Eastern Area Field Parcels

2.2.11 The eastern area consists of 7 fields which are referenced below:

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
D10	This field consists of pasture grassland and is surrounded by mature hedgerows. The south-east side of the field is flanked by trees along a Drovers Road. To the north-west is an open field adjacent to Marsh Green Farm. Houndbeare Lane lies to the north-east.	Access onto the field is via a gate from Quarter Mile Lane.	1:45
D10 Open Area	The section of the pasture field abutting Quarter Mile Lane, proposed to be left without any development and a new hedgerow planted to screen the proposed D10 solar arrays	Access onto the field is via a gate from Quarter Mile Lane.	1:45
D11	This field consists of pasture grassland bordered by hedgerows and a few mature trees. There are 2 trees within the field. Houndbeare Lane lies to the north-east. There is a gated access through the hedgerow at the west corner of the field joining field D12.	Access to the site is via agricultural fields to the west	1:34

Field Reference	Existing Landuse	Access	Average Gradient
	On the east side of the site, there is a pond that drains and forms a small watercourse that seeps into the ground at a line of trees to the west.	and via D12.	
D12	This field lies immediately south of field D11 and is pasture grassland. It is surrounded by mature hedgerows with a few trees on the east side of the field.	Access is via the Drovers Road along the side of field D10 into a gate at the west corner of the field. There is also a gate from the SE corner of D10	1:30
D13	This field consists of pasture grassland which is surrounded by hedgerows and mature trees along its south-west boundary. There is dense woodland to the south-east of the field. From the upper catchment hills to the south east, Ford Stream flows along the south and south-west side of the field and drains towards New Ford Farm to the north-west. There are a few small ponds at 2 locations on the east boundary of the field.	Access is made into the field from the Drovers Road that terminates at the north corner of the field.	1:25
Ecological Enhancement Area	Two sloping pasture fields with a pond and spring adjacent to the County Wildlife Site Withybed Copse	Access from D13	-

Table 2.3 – Eastern Area

3.0 Selection Process

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The site has been chosen by Taiyo Power & Storage Ltd in conjunction with the landowners due to the availability of a satisfactory, convenient grid connection and extant peri-urban nature of the valley. The site is of a suitable size, aspect and position within the landscape that makes it ideal for maximising solar gain for the generation of renewable energy, whilst also being located in an area where it will not create unacceptable impacts. The site is characterised by the A30 and electrical pylons and poles with 92% moderate quality agricultural land (Grade 3b) which is characterised as wet medium or heavy clay loam, with the remaining 8% found to be Grade 3a, located alongside the banks of Ford Stream; therefore, making the development area land appropriate for a grazed solar power facility. A large proportion of the proposed development is set in a natural hollow which has little/no visual impact on the wider area.
- 3.1.2 The key to selecting a site for renewable energy scheme and the biggest constraint to overcome is securing a viable point of connection to the local electricity distribution network. As more renewable energy schemes are constructed and commissioned, gaining a suitable grid connection is becoming increasingly problematic and challenging.
- 3.1.3 Key considerations that make the application site an ideal location for a solar farm are summarised below:
- The site has appropriate solar irradiation levels, is south facing and is free of any buildings or landscape features that could cause overshadowing;
 - The site lies within close proximity to a suitable and viable point of connection;
 - It is a relatively enclosed sheltered landscape characterised by fields which are generally surrounded by wide hedgerows, often with mature hedgerow oaks and small woodlands that provide screening from surrounding views (the proposed landscaping plan will further screen and enclose the site);
 - Encouraging the effective use of land, a greenfield site is necessary and the site has been identified as not being 'best and most versatile' agricultural land;
 - An access with appropriate highway capacity for the construction phase;
 - There are a relatively limited number of dwellings in the local area; and
 - An available and suitable parcel of land of the correct size and orientation to host a 30MWp solar farm.
- 3.1.4 In summary, the application site is considered acceptable for the generation renewable energy at the identified location and represents a suitable diversification of the rural economy.

3.2 Nature of a Solar Facility

- 3.2.1 The purpose of a solar facility is to generate electricity from daylight using ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels, which generate renewable energy, providing clean, renewable energy fed directly into the local electricity grid network.

3.2.2 Solar farms are time-limited developments and planning permission is sort for a temporary period of 40 years, after which the proposed development is reversible. This means the proposed development represents a sustainable diversification of a rural land-based business as supported through National guidance and so securing local economic benefit.

3.2.3 The scheme also presents extensive green infrastructure and ecology enhancements across the site and is aiming to be the first utility scale solar power facility in the UK which successfully achieves the Building with Nature accreditation.

3.3 Components of a Solar Facility

3.3.1 The principal elements of the proposed development are as follows:

- The proposed development has been designed to include c.60,000 solar modules (creating an anticipated export capacity of 30MWp). The modules will be ground mounted on frames which will be direct or screw piled to approximately 1.4m in depth. Each module will be approximately 2.4m in length and approximately 1.1m wide and positioned due south, except in DC04 and G4 which have been modified to reduce the potential for Glint & Glare. The site will include two types of frames as follows:
 - Angled at 15 degrees and c.3.14m in height (from back of the panel).
 - Angled at 20 degrees and c.2.9m in height (from back of panel).
 - These heights may increase slightly for those small array areas in Flood Zone 2, should the lower front edges need to be raised.
- The site design includes a total of c.139 inverter boxes. which would be attached to the array frames around the site.
- Underground cables will connect the power from the transformers (6 are proposed to raises the AC voltage) to the customer substation. Ground protection matting is proposed for most of the Hiab / crane trackways, notably upon the north and south ridge. Where necessary due to soft ground, trackways may be constructed of MOT Type 1 with up to 15% concrete. Most of the fields can revert to grass for the passage of operational maintenance access vehicles.
- Each transformer will measure 2.6m in height, 6m in length and 2.4m in width.
- DNO and customer substations and switch room would be located within a secure compound located to the north of Withybed Lane in field D4. A similar track would be provided for access and maintenance.
- The DNO substation will measure 3.1m in height, 5.5m in length and 4.9m in width.
- A Spare Parts container is also proposed at field D4 and will measure 2.9m in height, 6m long and 3.6m wide. This is positioned adjacent to the transformer adjacent to the customer substation.
- These buildings will be dark green in colour.
- A deer fence, up to 2m high would be provided around the perimeter of the solar array and wildlife habitat fields. A 200mm gap beneath the fence has been allowed for wildlife to circulate the area.

- Security and field gates are also proposed to access the development fields and solar array areas.

3.4 Construction

- 3.4.1 The total construction period the proposed development, including the preparation of the site, fencing, assembly and erection of the photovoltaic arrays, installation of the inverters / transformers and grid connection would be approximately 34 – 42 weeks (8 – 10 months). The precise period cannot be predicted due to the unknown timings and schedules of both the proposed escorted delivery convoys from the Reception Area adjacent to Exeter Airport and the extreme care and attention that will be required for marshalling construction traffic along the single carriageways of Quarter Mile Lane, Rockbeare Lane and Withybed Lane and through Marsh Green and Westcott settlements to ensure high levels of safety.
- 3.4.2 The proposed construction hours will be between 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 and 16:00 on Saturday. Construction deliveries can be controlled to occur outside the peak hours of 08:00 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 18:00 to avoid peak periods on the local highways.
- 3.4.3 In summary, during the busiest periods, the site could generate up to 22 daily trips (44 two-way), of which 12 trips (24 two-way) would be construction vehicles (HGVs) and 15 trips (two-way) would be staff (via cars, vans). This therefore represents a worst-case scenario in terms of construction traffic, given that the remaining 22-week construction period would only generate a limited number of deliveries.
- 3.4.4 A temporary signage strategy will be installed during the entire construction period to both direct site-bound traffic and make road users aware of turning vehicles at the site accesses and egresses. Signage would also be provided to make construction vehicle drivers aware of the potential for pedestrian movements in the vicinity of footpath links and along the lanes within the valley.
- 3.4.5 A full Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be provided as part of the planning condition and will include construction traffic routing both from the reception compound and internal site movements.
- 3.4.6 The draft CTMP provided in support of this planning application confirms that construction vehicles will be routed to the holding compound located immediately off Bishop's Court Lane to the southwest of the A30 / B3184 grade separated junction. These routing arrangements have been confirmed with the County Highways Department

3.5 Maintenance and Decommissioning

- 3.5.1 Once installed, the solar facility would require periodic visits for the purposes of maintenance of the facility. The facility would be unstaffed, being remotely operated and monitored.
- 3.5.2 The Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan provides details of the ground treatment around and below the arrays. These areas will be managed in accordance with stated requirements.
- 3.5.3 A Statement of Competence and Capacity associated with the monitoring and maintaining of the Proposed Development will also be submitted as part of the 1st Building with Nature accreditation submission.
- 3.5.4 The Landscape Strategy Plan proposed will be subject to a management plan to ensure that it is successfully maintained throughout the lifetime of the proposed development.

- 3.5.5 At the end of the facility's operational lifespan, the site shall be decommissioned and can revert once again to pastoral and arable use with no lasting harm or structures that would compromise the agricultural productivity of the site. In fact, it is considered the site being fallow for a period of years may increase the productivity of the fields when bought back into agricultural use.
- 3.5.6 The ecological enhancements and landscaping will remain in situ, ensuring that the biodiverse scheme habitats that establish throughout the lifetime of the scheme are retained and help to deliver along with the Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy Guiding Principles in perpetuity.

4.0 Appraisal

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A Request for a Screening Opinion under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 was made valid by East Devon District Council (EDDC) as the local planning authority for the proposed development in November 2021. On 16th December 2021 a screening opinion was received from EDDC. The response confirmed, that in the opinion of EDDC, there will not be a requirement for this development proposal to be subject of a formal Environmental Impact Assessment. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to be EIA development and an Environment Statement is not required.

4.1.2 The following technical studies and reports were commissioned and have been completed in support of the planning application:

- Completed Application Form and certificates;
- Application Drawing Package;
- Design & Access Statement, [this report], prepared by Enzygo Ltd;
- Planning Statement, prepared by Enzygo Ltd;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscaping and Planting Schedule, prepared by Steele Landscape Design Ltd;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, prepared by Enzygo Ltd;
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and Biodiversity Net Gain, prepared by Devon Wildlife Consultants;
- Geo Environmental Site Report, prepared by Enzygo Ltd;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Survey, prepared by Land and Heritage Ltd;
- Transport Statement and Outline Construction Transport Management Plan, prepared by DLP Ltd;
- Glint and Glare Assessment prepared by Pager Power Ltd;
- Agricultural Land Classification Survey prepared by Soil Environmental Services Ltd;
- Heritage Impact Assessment including Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and targeted Geophysics survey and Report, prepared by Heritage Archaeology Ltd; and
- Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Enzygo Ltd and Low Carbon Alliance Ltd.

4.2 Social Context

4.2.1 The proposed development responds directly to the threat of climate change and will thus indirectly provide social, economic, and environmental benefits to the wider population. Over the course of a year, it will generate electricity equivalent to the c.37,000MWh consumed by 18,500 homes across the EX5 2 postcode in 2020. Overall, the development will contribute

positively to the UK's transition from imported fossil fuels to home produced de-carbonised green energy and help to reverse the effects of climate change and protect future generations.

- 4.2.2 Notwithstanding the wider benefits which will help the UK achieve Net Zero, the proposed development also incorporates an area of open space to the north of field D10. At this time this area remains as private grassland, however to the 1.5 acres is proffered as a community area.
- 4.2.3 Devon Communities Together will, between May and July 2022, conduct a community consultation roadshow to follow-up on the pre-Application discussions with Devon County Highways, Devon County PRow, Aylesbeare Parish Council and private landowners regarding the permissive footpath; and, more broadly, identify latest neighbourhood priorities which may benefit from a community fund.

4.3 Economic Context

- 4.3.1 Taiyo Power and Storage Ltd is a partnership made up of Kajima Partnerships Ltd and Low Carbon Alliance, a professional Chartered Surveying and Engineering Consultancy which specialises in energy performance and property.
- 4.3.2 Low Carbon Alliance have a proven track record of improving the energy efficiency and providing renewable energy schemes, including rooftop PV on NHS and school buildings.
- 4.3.3 Building on the Low Carbon Alliance's track record of providing engineering and energy advice in the property sector, Kajima Partnerships Ltd is building a significant pipeline of new, subsidy-free solar, battery and other renewable energy projects. Kajima Partnership Ltd seek to build long-term relationships with landowners to deliver high quality renewable energy and power storage projects that provide diversified rural income sources and enhance biodiversity and the local environment.
- 4.3.4 Solar facilities contribute to economic growth by creating jobs in the local economy in product development/manufacture, as well as in installation and deployment.
- 4.3.5 The April 2022 Energy Security Strategy announced both a 2030 ambition of a four-fold raising of UK installed solar power from 14GW to 70GW; and a consultation to change Planning Policy to be more in favour of ground and roof mounted solar energy installations.
- 4.3.6 In addition to the need to decarbonise the electricity industry, the need for energy security has never been more important – recent world events and soaring energy costs highlight the need for the UK to become more energy autonomous.
- 4.3.7 Further economic benefits also include the payment of business rates, a proportion of which will be retained locally to be spent in the local area. This could amount to hundreds of thousands of pounds over the 40-years lifetime of the development.

4.4 Environmental Context

- 4.4.1 The proposed development provides an excellent opportunity to deliver environmental gains at both and local and national level through supporting the transition to a low carbon economy through the significant generation of renewable energy.
- 4.4.2 Furthermore, the development seeks to enhance the local ecosystems and biodiversity, aiming to become the first utility scale solar power facility in the UK to achieve the Building with Nature Accreditation. This accreditation seeks to ensure that nature is at the heart of development in a way that's good for people and wildlife. The NPPF (2021) seeks to protect

the best and most versatile agricultural land. The proposed development is not on land classified as best and most versatile land.

4.4.3 Overall, this proposed Ford Oaks solar and green infrastructure facility has the potential to bring significant ecological benefit as demonstrated within the detailed Ecological Environmental Management Plan (EEMP). The EEMP seeks to provide for both continued agricultural use and improvements in biodiversity as follows:

- Areas which will be managed for grazing (these fields are already being used for grazing and this agricultural use will not be replaced by the proposed development).
- Areas which will be seeded as meadow.
- Areas for new woodland planting (including wet woodland).
- Butterfly Banks.
- Bird Boxes.
- Tree and hedgerow protection and enhancement.

4.4.4 The Landscape Plan (and Tree Protection Plan) also seeks to protect and enhance existing landscaping and trees as follows:

- Maintenance of existing hedgerow at 3 and 4m in height;
- Protection of existing trees and associated roots;
- Provision of new planting.

4.4.5 The Drainage Strategy also seeks to ensure provide a wider benefit in management of surface water flows and provision of ecological enhancement features, including:

- Swales;
- Scrapes;
- Filters drains; and,
- Leaky Dams.

4.4.6 The site will be used for a temporary period for renewable energy production, contribute to the UK's energy security and directly address the climate change emergency.

4.5 Policy Context

4.5.1 In the 21st Century climate change was recognised as a phenomenon of international and global significance. The scientific evidence is overwhelming and identifies that **climate change**, as a result of rising greenhouse gas emissions, threatens the stability of the world's climate. The continuing production of greenhouses and carbon dioxide is contributing to the increasing rate of climate change.

4.5.2 The April 2022 Energy Security Strategy announced both a 2030 ambition of a four-fold raising of UK installed solar power from 14GW to 70GW; and a consultation to change Planning Policy to be more in favour of ground and roof mounted solar energy installations.

- 4.5.3 In October 2021 the Government published the Net Zero Strategy which sets out the government's strategy for progressing to net zero. **This includes the targets that by 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean energy.** This statement was also enshrined within the Governments Build Back Greener Strategy. Solar energy will be a critical strand to achieve this ambitious target.
- 4.5.4 On June 27th, 2019, the UK Parliament approved the net zero target in law, thereby changing the original target of 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990) in the UK to 2050 to 100%.
- 4.5.5 The Clean Growth Strategy provides guidance on increasing economic growth whilst reducing emissions. Page 99 stating that '*the Government wants to see more **people investing in solar** without Government Support*'.
- 4.5.6 In addition to the need to decarbonise the electricity industry, the need for **energy security** has never been more important, recent world events and soaring energy costs highlight the need for the UK to become more energy autonomous. The April 2022 Energy Security Strategy announced a 2030 ambition of a four-fold raising of UK installed solar power from 14GW to 70GW.
- 4.5.7 These Global and National drives have also been recognised more locally. **East Devon District Council have declared a climate and ecological emergency** and have made a pledge to become a carbon-neutral council by 2040. The East Devon Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025 sets out the Council's programme to address Climate Change and focuses on the reduction of carbon emissions within the district.
- 4.5.8 The proposed development responds to the climate change emergency through the provision of 30MWp of renewable and low carbon energy equivalent to the power consumed by 18,500 homes across the EX5 2 postcode area in 2020. The development will decarbonise the UKs energy supply whilst providing East Devon District Council with the opportunity to achieve their local targets for Climate Change.
- 4.5.9 Planning has a significant role to play in meeting these commitments by understanding the local potential for renewable and low carbon technologies, identifying suitable locations for renewable and low-carbon energy production, and supporting infrastructure.
- 4.5.10 The East Devon Local Plan (adopted 2016) sets out the basis for the determination of planning applications in the district, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). Strategy 39 of the East Devon Local Plan supports the principle of renewable or low carbon energy projects subject to them following current best practise and the proposal addressing any adverse impacts on features of environmental and heritage sensitivity, including any cumulative landscape and visual impacts. Proposals will need to consider the options in relation to location, scale, and design and mitigate any unavoidable harm. When schemes are proposed in the open countryside, there will be a requirement to remove all equipment and restore the land to its former condition after the lifespan of the development.
- 4.5.11 The site has no formal designation other than being in the Aerodrome Safeguarding Zone and is therefore considered open countryside (refer to Figure 6). The proposal map (figure 4.1 below) identifies the adjacent County Wildlife Sites.

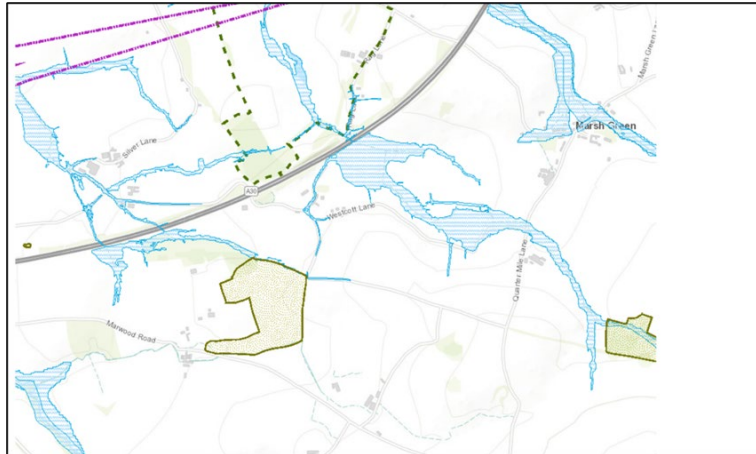


Figure 4.1: Extract from the Adopted Proposal Map

- 4.5.12 The proposed development is also assessed against the Aylesbeare Parish Plan and Rockbeare Parish Plan.
- 4.5.13 Rockbeare Parish Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' by East Devon District Council, thus is a statutory development plan which has significant weight when assessing this proposed development. The Parish Council's vision is *"Responsible, distinctive and sustainable habitation in the countryside"*.
- 4.5.14 Aylesbeare Parish Council requested that part of their parish be designated a neighbourhood area. The area was designated on 3 September 2014 and this allowed Aylesbeare Parish Council to commence the production of a Neighbourhood Plan with the support of, and input from, the residents of the Parish. A draft Neighbourhood Plan was submitted in January 2017 however, it is yet to be 'made'.

4.6 Evaluation

- 4.6.1 The supporting suite of technical assessments confirms that all technical issues can be addressed, and the supporting analysis has established that this site is entirely suitable for the development of a solar and green infrastructure facility.
- 4.6.2 The proposed development has been assessed against planning policy within the supporting Planning Statement.

5.0 The Proposal

5.1 Land Use

Principle of Use

- 5.1.1 The application is for a ground mounted Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility designed to export approximately 30MWp of electricity. The nature of such a solar and green infrastructure facility and the suitability of this site for these uses are described in previous sections of this document and in more detail in the Planning Statement.
- 5.1.2 The Clean Growth Strategy (2017) provides the Government's latest guidance on solar parks and how best to quickly deliver "clean growth" which is in essence economic growth without an accompanying net increase in emissions. The Government identifies securing increased investment across the energy sector while minimising public costs. This application would export circa 30MWp of renewable energy without any subsidy a significant benefit of the application and exactly what is necessary to deliver "clean growth".
- 5.1.3 The Energy Security Strategy (2012) also recognises the key aim of increasing the supply of renewable energy of the electricity supply which will reduce the need for the importing of fossil fuels. Through the increase of low carbon and renewable energy the UK energy supply will become more secure while simultaneously meeting climate change targets.
- 5.1.4 On 20th April 2021, the UK announced a climate change target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. In line with the recommendation from the independent Climate Change Committee, this sixth Carbon Budget limits the volume of greenhouse gases emitted over a 5-year period from 2033 to 2037, taking the UK more than three-quarters of the way to reaching net zero by 2050.
- 5.1.5 On 7th April 2022, the UK published an update to the Energy Security Strategy (2012). Within this, it stated that the UK Government expects to see Solar Installations have a 'fivefold increase in deployment by 2035' and that the Government will consult on amending planning rules to strengthen policy in favour of development on non-protected land, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place.
- 5.1.6 The paper goes on to state that '*we will continue supporting the effective use of land by encouraging large scale projects to locate on previously developed, or lower value land, where possible, and ensure projects are designed to avoid, mitigate, and where necessary, compensate for the impacts of using greenfield sites*'. The proposed development is therefore entirely in accordance with the above national strategies.

Location

- 5.1.7 The key to selecting a site for a renewable energy scheme, and the biggest constraint to overcome, is securing a viable point of connection to the national grid.
- 5.1.8 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) report identifies that the land is of overwhelming (92% total site coverage) moderate quality (Grade 3b) and so not considered 'best and most versatile'. Therefore, in national, regional and local terms, this development would not have an impact on the loss of best and most versatile land, with only 8% of the total site area is designated as 'good-moderate' quality (Grade 3a) and the majority of this will be used as ecological mitigation or areas of landscaping.

Ecological Enhancement

5.1.9 The site will continue to be used for livestock grazing between and around the arrays. The comprehensive EMMP, the Landscape Strategy and Drainage Plan will deliver numerous ecological benefits to the site which deliver a significant net gain in biodiversity (121%) and includes:

- Soil treatment and vegetation cover, as well as the provision of SuDS drainage features;
- Provision of leaky dams, which will utilise the channel capacity to back-up flood water, slowing the flow by holding back and spreading water into the floodplain when the water level is high during flood conditions, but not affecting normal flow conditions;
- Small scrapes will be dug in areas nearby the stream to hold excess flood water. An additional bund will be installed in the mitigation field south of D13, to create a scrape from the water draining down the hill. These scrapes will drain naturally through evaporation over the course of spring and early summer.
- The proposed development includes a significant quantity of landscape enhancement and planting;
- The proposal does not require the removal of trees during the construction or operational phases;
- A new area of tree planting will be created within the ecological mitigation area to the south of D13, within the narrow field bordering the Withybed Copse County Wildlife Site (CWS 3);
- Within the proposed development site, there are a small number of aquatic habitats, notably along the stream, the majority of which are currently species poor and heavily poached by livestock. The proposed development seeks to increase the biodiversity resilience and connectivity of the water bodies. This in turn will increase the flood resilience of the Clyst catchment as well as boost local amphibian, invertebrate, fish, and aquatic plant biodiversity;
- Several small ponds are currently present on site, the majority of these are heavily shaded. The proposed development will undertake thinning of vegetation around the ponds to increase light levels and increase perennial diversity around the ponds via seed sowing.
- The majority of the site is grassland. All grassland types on site are currently heavily modified and species poor. A variety of seeding and management regimes will be undertaken across the site to create a variety of well-connected grassland types. For example, the parcels along the riparian strip are proposed to be established with traditional Devon meadow seeds to provide botanical diversity as well as habitat for butterflies and other pollinators.

5.2 Layout

5.2.1 The layout covers approximately 74 hectares of land which consists of:

- c.29 hectares of fenced solar arrays with species-rich grassland, plus associated infrastructure (such as transformers, substations and internal roads both inside and outside the fenced land parcels);
- c.26 further hectares of enhanced species-rich grassland and stream habitats within the fences;
- 19 hectares of dedicated woodland, wet meadow, stream and hedgerow ecological habitat and corridor enhancements and landscape planting; outside the fences yet within the development boundary.

5.2.2 The development area of c.29 hectares consists of c.60,000 solar modules (creating an anticipated export capacity of 30MWp). The modules will be ground mounted on a frame which will be direct or screw piled to approximately 1.4m in depth. Each module will be approximately 2.4m in length and approximately 1.1m wide and positioned due south, except where to avoid potential glare in fields DC04 and G4. The site will include two types of frames as follows:

- Angled at 15 degrees and c.3.14m in height (from back of the panel).
- Angled at 20 degrees and c.2.9m in height (from back of panel).

5.2.3 These heights may increase slightly for those small array areas in Flood Zone 2, should the lower front edges need to be raised.

5.2.4 The site will include a total of c.139 inverter boxes. which will be attached to the array frames around the site.

5.2.5 Underground cables will connect the power from the transformers (6 are proposed to raises the AC voltage) to the customer substation.

5.2.6 Each transformer will measure 2.6m in height, 6m in length and 2.4m in width.

5.2.7 DNO and customer substations and switch room would be located within a secure compound located to the north of Withybed Lane in field D4. A similar track would be provided for access and maintenance.

5.2.8 The DNO substation will measure 3.1m in height, 5.5m in length and 4.9m in width.

5.2.9 A Spare Parts container is also proposed at field D4 and will measure 2.9m in height, 6m long and 3.6m wide. This is positioned adjacent to the transformer adjacent to the customer substation.

5.2.10 These buildings will be dark green in colour.

5.2.11 A deer fence, up to 2m high would be provided around the perimeter of the solar array and wildlife habitat fields. A 200mm gap beneath the fence has been allowed for wildlife to circulate the area. Panel access gates will be provided at site entrances.

5.2.12 A wild mesh security fence and security gate will be provided for the secure DNO compound.

- 5.2.13 Ground protection matting is proposed for most of the Hiab / crane trackways, notably upon the north and south ridge. Where necessary due to soft ground, trackways may be constructed of MOT Type 1 with up to 15% concrete. Most of the fields can revert to grass for the passage of operational maintenance access vehicles.
- 5.2.14 Underground cabling will be used to connect the transformers to the substation.
- 5.2.15 The layout of the c.45 hectares of green infrastructure enhancements has been designed to build upon the existing riparian, hedgerow and woodland habitats within and abutting the site boundary. The proposals are detailed within the landscape plans and ecological enhancement plans.
- 5.2.16 It is proposed that the layout and engineering details of the proposed enhancements to the Quarter Mile Lane and Westcott Lane junction resurfacing need to be agreed by Devon PROW and Highways departments.

5.3 Design

5.3.1 The design of the scheme has been an iterative process and is founded on 7 elements:

- Infrastructure and Utilities.
- Access and Gates.
- Glint and Glare.
- Drainage and Flood Zones.
- Archaeological Assets.
- Ecological Impacts.
- Consultation with the Public.
- Consultation with Statutory Consultees.

5.3.2 These are discussed below.

Infrastructure and Utilities

5.3.3 The site is subject to a number of utilities as follows:

- Overhead Power Cables and Pylons: The site contains five large steel pylons with their oversailing cables which dominate the valley as they pass north-south across the site.
- Two other electricity circuits of cables and wooden poles pass across the valley – one across the south facing slope of the northern ridge and the other between the site and the Westcott hamlet.
- A High-Pressure gas main which runs along Withybed Lane inside the hedgerows, yet outside the perimeter security fence, within fields D4 and D6.

5.3.4 The final layout has ensured that these features are protected and, where necessary standoffs agreed with the utility companies, provided.

Access and Gates

5.3.5 The design of the proposed facility during both construction and operation has been selected to ensure that traffic can safely enter each area without significantly impacting the local highways whilst striving to avoid passing through Marsh Green and Aylesbeare.

5.3.6 Environmental considerations have also been central to the finalised scheme, seeking to ensure that no trees (or their roots) are harmed from temporary expansion of site entrances.

5.3.7 Boundary treatments have been selected to screen the solar modules (and ancillary infrastructure) whilst providing significant levels of biodiversity uplift and enhancement.

5.3.8 The finalised access and gate design is outlined below:

Access into areas of infrastructure

- 5.3.9 Access into the solar facility will be via security gates which are 2m in height and 4m wide. A weld mesh security fence will be provided for the secure compound at the DNO substation (and associated equipment).
- 5.3.10 A deer fence, up to 2m high would be provided around the perimeter of the solar array and wildlife habitat fields. A 200mm gap beneath the fence has been allowed for wildlife to circulate the area.
- 5.3.11 Details of the fencing and gates are provided in plans LOA1001.214.Di and LOA1001 214D.
- 5.3.12 The Construction Phase Plans (ref TPS FO 001 005 to TPS FO 001 007) identify the status of the site during the construction phase. The key aspects of the construction phase are outlined below:

On-Site Access

- 5.3.13 Access into the site (and within the site) will be from a number of existing gateways (identified in section 5.7 below). In some cases, temporary widening is required to allow vehicle access, on completion of the construction phase these accesses will be replanted and either have security gates installed, be planted up to connect the hedges or restored to their original form.

Internal Access Tracks

- 5.3.14 The internal access tracks (which will be retained during operation) will have temporary turning areas to ensure vehicle movement through the site during the construction phase.
- 5.3.15 The location of these access tracks is presented in the construction phase plans. These tracks will be retained throughout the operational phase of the development and have filter drains where appropriate.

Equipment Distribution

- 5.3.16 Large deliveries will be transported to the site in HGVs, depositing equipment and materials and fuel within the designated set down and storage areas.
- 5.3.17 Some heavier materials will be lifted by hiab truck or a dedicated crane.
- 5.3.18 Modules and electrical equipment will be distributed into the construction fields using tractors and trailers, quad bikes with trailers, diggers and dumper trucks.

Set Down Areas/Construction Compounds

- 5.3.19 A delivery and storage compound will be located in field D6.
- 5.3.20 Additional, temporary distribution areas are likely in fields D4, D10, D14 and DC01.

Staff Welfare and Parking

- 5.3.21 The site designs provides for temporary on-site parking and welfare facilities in area D3.
- 5.3.22 The welfare facilities will consist of a temporary portacabin structure which is approximately 9m long, 3m wide and 3m high.

Cable routing

- 5.3.23 The solar array mounted inverters will be connected to the transformers by underground cabling.
- 5.3.24 Separate directional drills under Quarter Mile Lane, Westcott Lane and Withybed Lane will be required to ensure connection of the power cables from the transformers through the site to the customer substation in D4, as shown in the construction phase plans.

Glint & Glare

- 5.3.25 A detailed assessment process has been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed scheme on Exeter airport, local road users and residents.
- 5.3.26 The results of this assessment and subsequent mitigation designs to negate any impacts of significance upon road users or dwellings have led to removal of fields from the scheme which lie alongside the A30 and an adjustment to the orientation of panels in fields in DC04 and G5.

Drainage and Flood Zones

- 5.3.27 A sequential approach to flooding has been followed, developing outside the floodplain where possible and ensuring a suitable passive drainage system is in place.
- 5.3.28 Betterment to the existing drainage situation will be provided by the following:
- Soil treatment and vegetation cover, as well as the provisions of SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) features of swales and filter beds at relevant locations around the fields under the array table drip lines.
 - Provision of leaky dams, which will utilise the ditch and channel capacity to back-up flood water, slowing the flow by holding back and spreading water into the fields when the water level is high during flood conditions, but not affecting normal flow conditions.
 - Provision of shallow scrapes adjacent to the onsite watercourses, increasing floodplain capacity.

Archaeology Assets

- 5.3.29 The Geophysical survey identified some anomalies as potential archaeological interest in mostly the northern and southernly part of the site. In order to mitigate against any potential impact on these, the design of the development was amended to either remove whole fields from the development (such as field G2 and G3) or to provide a significant development buffer (circa 10m).
- 5.3.30 There are a small number of anomalies, in fields D17, D12, D13 and D2 to D4, which are likely associated with agricultural activity, including some linear features aligned with historic mapping. Given the likely relative archaeological potential of these have not been buffered.
- 5.3.31 As agreed with the County Archaeologist, this planning application includes a programme of trenching work to confirm (ground truth) and record the details of the anomalies. This will ensure that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on these remains.

Ecology

5.3.32 A considerable amount of ecological survey work has been undertaken to identify biodiversity in the area. The key results are:

- **Riparian Zone** – the watercourse is currently heavily poached with limited plant diversity. A small fish population is located in the western extent of the site. Streams form an important area for badgers as a water source and foraging. There are a few riparian bird species identified along the streams and limited bat activity associated with the streams.
- **Extended Woodland** – Adjacent County Wildlife Site (CWS) with Barbastelle Bats associated within. CWS woodland edge provides swarming site for Noctule Bats.
- **Hedgerows** – Flight lines for at least 11 species of bats.
- **Grassland** – Foraging habitat for a maternity roost of Serotine Bats. However, limited value and flora diversity.
- **Breeding Birds** – hedgerows, woodland and dense scrub within the wider survey area support a diverse assemblage of nesting species. One barn owl roost identified at field D2.

5.3.33 The proposed development includes dedicated ecological mitigation and enhancement areas located across the site and linked by habitat corridor retention and enhancement. Traditional Devon wildflower meadows will be created in these mitigation areas, and species-rich sheep-grazed pasture will be created around the solar arrays. An ecological mitigation area including woodland planting and wet grassland will be created adjacent to a County Wildlife Site. Mitigation also includes widening of the watercourse corridor through riparian habitat enhancement, to provide botanical diversity as well as habitat for butterflies and other pollinators, wetland grassland creation and installation of leaky dams.

5.3.34 Measures to enhance the site post development are provided to take into account the national biodiversity strategy detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to protect and restore priority habitats and species. Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 requires a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be a condition of planning permission in England. It is anticipated that a net gain of 121% can be achieved through onsite mitigation.

Consultation with the Public

5.3.35 The design of the Solar and Green Infrastructure Facility has been an iterative process which has included consultation with the following groups:

- Devon County Council Assets Department on the 3rd June 2021.
- A project briefing to the Leader of Devon County Council mid June 2021.
- A presentation to the Devon County Farms Committee on the 27th September 2021.
- A presentation to Rockbeare Parish Council, with County and District Councillors, on the 27th October 2021.
- A presentation to Aylesbeare Parish Council on the 3rd November 2021. In attendance was a Councillor from East Devon District Council.

- A site walkover with residents on the 18th November 2021.
- A site walkover with the Chairmen and Clerks of Aylesbeare and Rockbeare Parish Councils, DCC Area Highways Officer (Aylesbeare area) and DCC PROW researcher on 5th January 2022.
- Attendance at the Rockbeare Parish Council Extraordinary meeting on the 2nd February at the Hampton by Hilton hotel near Exeter Airport.

5.3.36 A dedicated website including feedback form was launched in December 2021.

5.3.37 The results of the consultation programme are as follows:

- Deletion of 35 acres of agricultural land from the scheme.
- Deletion of array tables proposed on the north facing valley slopes, south of Westcott Lane (the valley slopes of D5, D6, D7, G2 and G3).
- Deletion of array tables being proposed to be installed in the fields most proximate to less than ten residences on the eastern fringe of Westcott hamlet (G4, DC03).
- Deletion of array tables being proposed to be installed in the two fields north of Marsh Green, reducing visual impacts from Higher Upcott.
- Confirmation with the landowners that the hedgerows, hedgebanks and trees along the lanes and within the development fields will be maintained at, and allowed to grow up to, heights that currently screen the majority of views into and across the fields and through the valley.
- Deleting all proposed construction phase uses of the gate into D17 which is on the west side of the blind bend on the lane west of Marsh Green.

Consultation with Statutory Consultees

5.3.38 The pre-application consultation process with East Devon District Council and relevant Statutory Consultees resulted in the following iterations to the proposed design:

- Improvements to the surfacing of the Quarter Mile Land and Westcott Lane junction;
- Relocation of the transformer in field D2;
- Gates being agricultural in their style and colour.

5.3.39 In addition to the formal pre-application process, technical disciplines have consulted with their counterparts within EDDC to scope the assessment work. Details of these consultations are provided within the relevant technical reports.

5.3.40 The applicant is committed to continuing post submission engagement with the local community and intends to continue attendance at Parish Council meetings during this time.

5.4 Scale & Amount

- 5.4.1 The scale of the development on site is determined by the equipment necessary to efficiently generate the required renewable energy (30MWp) and the availability of land for ecological habitat and landscape enhancements.
- 5.4.2 The proposed development consists of approximately 74 hectares of land which consists of:
- c.29 hectares of fenced solar arrays with species-rich grassland, plus associated infrastructure (such as transformers, substations and internal roads both inside and outside the fenced land parcels);
 - c.26 further hectares of enhanced species-rich grassland and stream habitats within the fences;
 - 19 hectares of dedicated woodland, wet meadow, stream and hedgerow ecological habitat and corridor enhancements and landscape planting; outside the fences yet within the development boundary.
- 5.4.3 The arrays are mounted upon a simple metal framework. Each panel will be 2.4m in length and 1.1m wide and positioned due south except for part of the solar panels within field DC0 and G5.
- 5.4.4 The panels will be direct, or screw piled to approximately 1.4m in depth.
- 5.4.5 The chosen angle and position above ground balances the need to leave space around the foot of the panels (to allow for grazing to take place), to minimise the vertical height and to optimise the solar arrays position in relation to the sun.

Grid Connection Requirements

- 5.4.6 The DNO substation is located within field D4 with the grid connection route running along the internal track (also located in field D4) to the point of connection which is located to the north north-west of field D4.

Land Ownership

- 5.4.7 The land is in the ownership of Devon County Council and two private landowners.

Design Parameters

- 5.4.8 The design of the proposed development has been guided by the following strategies:
- **The Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy** which sets out the guiding principles for development Green Infrastructure in Devon.
 - **The Exeter Area and East Devon Green Infrastructure Study** which includes the key objectives of biodiversity gain, the mitigation and adaptation to climate change, the management of population growth & promote economic development and improvements to health and wellbeing of local communities.
 - **The East Devon District Council Heritage Strategy 2019-2031** which provides information on the historic environment resource of East Devon and strategies for positively managing the historic environment resource

- **Building with Nature Accreditation:** Standards required for the accreditation include:
 - Standard 1 Optimises Multifunctionality and Connectivity.
 - Standard 2 Positively responds to the Climate Emergency.
 - Standard 3 Maximises Environmental Net Gains.
 - Standard 4 Champions a Context Driven Approach.
 - Standard 5 Creates Distinctive Places.
 - Standard 6 Secures Effective Place-keeping.
 - Standard 7 Brings Nature Closer to People.
 - Standard 8 Supports Equitable and Inclusive Places.
 - Standard 9 Delivers Climate Resilient Water Management.
 - Standard 10 Brings Water Closer to People.
 - Standard 11 Delivers Wildlife Enhancement.
 - Standard 12 Underpins Nature's Recovery.

5.4.9 An extensive design programme has been undertaken to ensure that the proposed development has reduced its impacts on the site and surrounds as follows:

- **Infrastructure and Utilities:** There are a significant number of utilities running across the proposed development site. These include overhead lines, pylons, electricity cables and a high-pressure gas main. The final layout has ensured that these features are protected and where necessary a standoff provided.
- **Access:** The design has sought to ensure that access into the site is achieved, during construction, operation and decommissioning, with public safety as a priority.
- **Landscape & Boundary Treatment:** Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (2021) requires that developments contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. The proposed development has proposed planting and enhancement measures such as hedgerow, fencing and gates which have been carefully designed and considered to ensure that any adverse visual impacts of the proposals are minimised.
- **Drainage and Flooding:** A sequential approach to flooding has been followed, developing outside the floodplain where possible and ensuring a suitable passive drainage system is in place.
- **Archaeology:** Following the identification of archaeological remains, the design has either removed fields or included a buffer around the features of greatest significance. A programme of ground truthing is proposed prior to development being commenced. Should remains of significance (as defined by the County Archaeologist) be identified a scheme of mitigation will be agreed.
- **Agriculture:** Where possible, agricultural uses have been retained at the proposed development site.

- **Ecology:** Existing flora and fauna have been enhanced and protected and new biodiversity assets created achieving a biodiversity uplift of 121%.
- **Visual Impact:** Where the impact of the design has been considered to give rise to significant visual impacts, these fields have been removed from the layout. Screening has been proposed to mitigate the impact of the development on its surroundings.
- **Consultation:** A programme of consultation has been undertaken resulting in the removal of some fields from the design and amendments to access arrangements.

5.4.10 Overall, the design parameters outlined above have reduced the scale of the development and increased biodiversity contribution.

5.5 Appearance

- 5.5.1 The site and subsequent layout have been carefully considered so that impacts are minimised, and mitigation provided where necessary. A high voltage solar facility, as energy generating infrastructure, is functional by nature and is not publicly accessible with no public realm within the fenced area of the site.
- 5.5.2 The specific angles of the frames have been designed depending on the existing and proposed landscape screening and the potential for glint and glare; and amendments have been made to the angles and orientation of the panels in fields DC04 and G4 in order to mitigate any potential glint & glare at one nearby dwelling.
- 5.5.3 The proposed transformers, substation and compound are located away from public views and have been designed to match other agricultural structures in the area.
- 5.5.4 Where possible, the field gates have been designed to fit into the agricultural nature of the surroundings. Security gates are proposed in areas where necessary.
- 5.5.5 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted in support of this application has concluded that the Visual impacts on from a very short stretch of the A30 Exeter to Honiton (dual carriageway) adjacent to the site would be minimal adverse, with no development abutting the A30 and a new hedge screening the nearest solar arrays.
- 5.5.6 Visual impacts to users on Westcott Lane would be, at completion of the development, seen as Medium-High, however, from year five onwards, after ecological management of the trackside hedges has taken shape, that those impacts would reduce to minimal adverse from year five onwards.
- 5.5.7 Visual impacts on both Marsh Green and the East Devon AONB would be Neutral due to development site being screened by intervening landform, buildings and dense and tall trees/hedgerows.
- 5.5.8 Cumulative effects of similar solar facilities within the study area would be seen to have a negligible direct cumulative increase in impact to the landscape character. The cumulative impacts on the visual amenity of the study area would be Neutral as there are limited 'in combination' or 'sequential' intervisibility of the proposed development site and any of the other
- 5.5.9 Ecological, biodiversity, water management and landscape enhancements are the majority (45 out of 77 hectares) of the proposed development. The scheme presents extensive opportunities, for green infrastructure improvements and ecology networks across the site utilising the Building with Nature Accreditation Assessment. The proposed scheme offers a net biodiversity gain of 121%.

5.6 Landscape

- 5.6.1 This main development site is located within National Character Area NCA 148: Devon Redlands and within the landscape type LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes and LCT 3E (formerly 4D): Lowland Plains as defined within East Devon and Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment (March 2019). These describe the landscape character of the site and surrounding area as having a relatively high proportion of tree cover with views enclosed by woodland and the local landform, bounded to the west by the A30 dual carriageway and with 5 large pylons, with oversailing cables, dissecting the valley.
- 5.6.2 The assessment identified that the direct impacts during construction and the long term 40 year operation phase on the landscape use/cover would be moderate adverse for the site. However, the proposed mitigation measure of 45 hectares of biodiverse grassland, riparian and woodland habitat creation and other green/landscape and ecological infrastructure measures would reduce this impact to slight adverse. In-direct Impacts on the wider landscape type LCT 3b and LCT 3E and all other landscape types within the study area would not generally be experienced from vantage points greater than 260 metres (generally) from the development site boundary, due to limited inter-visibility with the development site and the wider countryside of the study area.
- 5.6.3 The development is low lying and benefits from a number of woodland blocks within the local landscape. As part of the landscape plan, improvements will be made to existing hedgerow boundaries with substantial planting proposed around the development site. The plan will ensure that very limited number of dwellings to the site boundary will not be subject to overbearing or overshadowing.
- 5.6.4 The full landscape enhancement measures are set out in the Landscape Plan ref 035220.

Biodiversity Enhancements

- 5.6.5 Ecological and biodiversity enhancements is at the core of the proposed development. The scheme delivers a design to enhance green infrastructure and ecology networks across the valley utilising the Building with Nature Accreditation Assessment. The key areas of improvements are:
- **Woodland** - A new wooded area will be created within the ecological mitigation area to the south of D13 within the narrow field bordering the Withybed Copse County Wildlife Site.
 - **Wetlands, Watercourses and Standing Water** - Leaky dams will be installed along the length of the Ford Stream. Watercourses will be sown with pond edge seed mix in Fields D9 and G4. Along D9 and G4 a 5m buffer strip of tussocky grass mix will be sown. This will reduce pollution entering the stream from the north.
 - **Scrapes** - Small scrapes will be dug in areas nearby the stream to hold excess flood water. These will improve more invertebrate biomass and diversity on site as well as providing breeding opportunities for amphibians.
 - **Ponds** – Several ponds are present on site, the majority of these are heavily shaded. Thinning of vegetation around these will take place to increase light levels and increase perennial diversity via seed sowing.

- **Grasslands** – All grassland types are currently heavily modified and species poor. A variety of seeding regimes will be undertaken across the site to create a variety of well-connected grassland types.
- **Trees** – The proposed development does not require the removal of any trees during both the construction or operational phases. Significant enhancement measures proposed will lead to a greater level of protection to the existing trees which will result in a highly beneficial impact on these important landscape and ecological features.

5.6.6 This fulfils the Building with Nature accreditation as follows:

- **Standard 1 Optimises Multifunctionality and Connectivity:** The proposed development seeks to enhance the boundaries of the site with the CWS's to increase the biodiversity gains in these areas. Boundary treatments have been designed to maximise biodiversity and screening.
- **Standard 2 Positively responds to the Climate Emergency:** The proposed development seeks to respond to Climate Change at its very core, the facility also seeks to improve the areas resilience to climate change through the provision of biodiversity improvements, landscaping and drainage betterment.
- **Standard 3 Maximises Environmental Net Gains:** The proposed development provides a biodiversity net gain of 121%.
- **Standard 4 Champions a Context Driven Approach:** The proposed development positively responds to the local context, including the physical environment, such as landscape and urban character and social, economic, and environmental priorities as demonstrated by this DAS.
- **Standard 5 Creates Distinctive Places:** The proposed development seeks to enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the area whilst minimising the visual impact on local residents and users.
- **Standard 6 Secures Effective Place-keeping:** The applicant is committed to delivering and maintaining the biodiversity and landscape features throughout the life of the project.
- **Standard 7 Brings Nature Closer to People:** The proposed development seeks to increase and enhance biodiversity in the area, including beetle and butterfly banks, bird boxes and improvements to the riparian habitats.
- **Standard 8 Supports Equitable and Inclusive Places:** The increase in biodiversity in the area and improvements to the junction at Quarter Mile Lane and Westcott Lane will aid in accessibility for the local community.
- **Standard 9 Delivers Climate Resilient Water Management:** The proposed development offers an overall betterment in terms of drainage and flooding.
- **Standard 10 Brings Water Closer to People:** The proposed development proposed improvements to the riparian habitat.
- **Standard 11 Delivers Wildlife Enhancement:** The proposed development offers significant amounts of wildlife habitats.

- **Standard 12 Underpins Nature's Recovery:** The proposed development includes enhancements to the existing arboriculture, landscape and habitats.

5.7 Access

- 5.7.1 The detailed routing negotiations with the County Highway Authority and securing an offsite Reception Compound adjacent to the M5/M30 junction for escorted convoys are examples of how the access arrangements have been diligently considered and organised by the Applicant.
- 5.7.2 Further consideration about highway safety in the valley is evidenced by restricting construction access through a gateway on a blind bend.
- 5.7.3 A conditioned detailed CTMP could be expected to include a dedicated intra-site distribution traffic controller & qualified banksman, as part of the site construction management team, who would also act as a construction traffic liaison 'officer' with the residents of Marsh Green, Aylesbeare and Westcott throughout the construction period.
- 5.7.4 The development site is accessed via differing field gates dependant on location as follows:
- The northern area is located immediately southeast of the A30. The land is currently accessed via the main farm gate located just east of the bridge over the A30.
 - The eastern area is located to the east off Quarter Mile Lane and features an existing field access off Quarter Mile Lane.
 - The centre of the site is located to the west of Quarter Mile Lane, and in the west of Westcott Lane, and can be accessed via four existing agricultural access points (G4, D7, D9, D14).
 - The southern area is located to the north and south of Withybed Lane. There are two agricultural accesses located to the north, and one agricultural access located to the south of the carriageway.
- 5.7.5 During the construction period, all vehicles will report to the construction reception site where the vehicles will be registered.
- 5.7.6 Following arrival of all required vehicles/materials a convoy will leave the site and will be taken back to the A30 roundabout adjacent to the Reception Compound before being proceeding to the site (please see plan below).

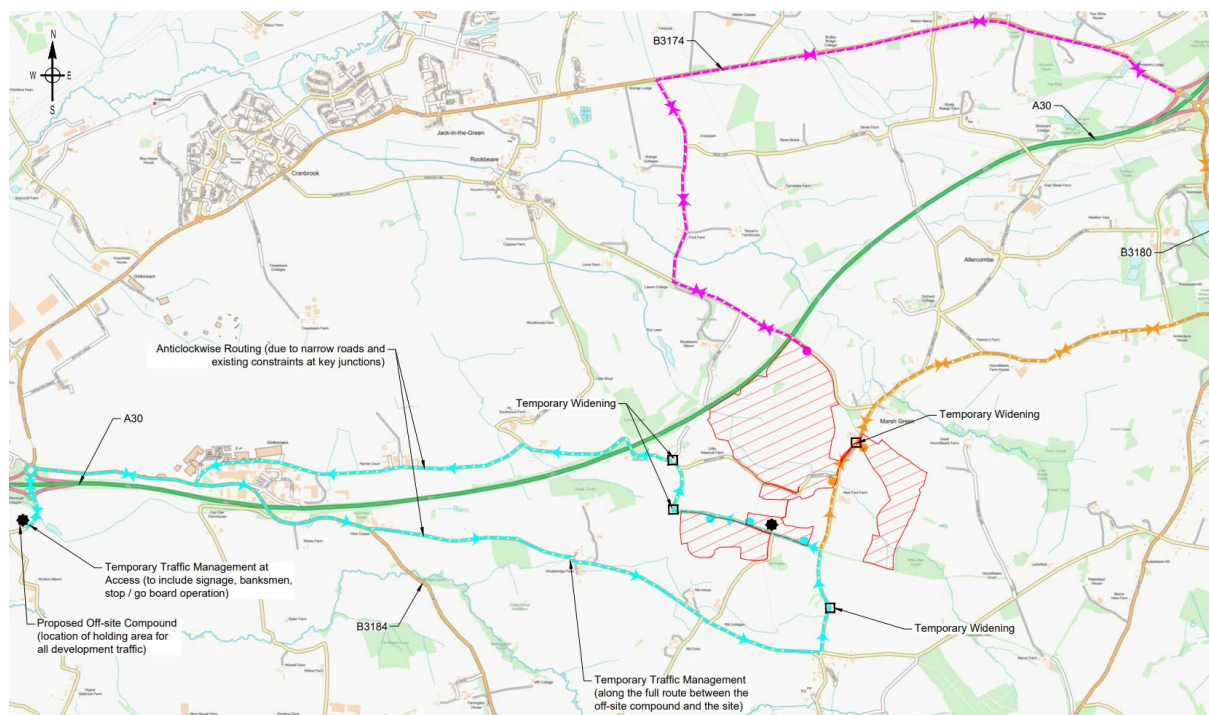


Figure 5.1: Construction traffic routing

5.7.7 It is proposed that for the majority of deliveries would be in / towards the site via Route B and out / leaving the site via Route A. The remaining limited locations that will require limited transformer and crane access may be routed via Route C and Route D.

5.7.8 Access into and within the development site during the construction phase will be from a number of existing gateways as identified below. In some cases, temporary widening is required to allow vehicle access, on completion of the construction phase these accesses will be replanted and restored to their original form as follows:

- **DC01:** Temporary widening of existing gated access to create 6.8m opening:
- **D10:** Temporary road plate widening into verge and widening of existing gated access to create 6.5m opening.
- **D7:** Widening of existing gated access to create a 4.4m opening.
- **D2:** Temporary road plate widening into verge and widening of existing gated access to create a 8.6m opening.
- **Access into gate D6 (Entry only):** Widening of existing gated access to create 8.3m opening.
- **Exit from gate at D4 (Exit only):** Temporary road plate widening into verge and widening of existing gated access to create a 5.5m opening.
- **Field access between field DC01 to D15:** Exiting opening to be increased to 6m.
- **Field access between field D15 to D16:** Existing opening to be increased to 5m.

5.7.9 During construction a temporary gate will be installed at the field entrances.

- 5.7.10 Prior to commencement of construction, a “No Construction Access” sign will be sited in front of a temporary blockade in front of the gateway into the SE of field D17.
- 5.7.11 The internal access tracks (which will be retained during operation) will have temporary turning areas to ensure vehicle movements throughout the site.
- 5.7.12 The location of these access tracks are presented in the construction plan (ref DV5045 PD-10).
- 5.7.13 The layout plan (TPS FO 001 001) identifies those tracks which will be retained throughout the operational phase of the development.
- 5.7.14 During the operational phase it is anticipated that vehicles will enter the site 1 to 2 times a month for maintenance purposes.
- 5.7.15 A detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Transport Statement (TS) has been submitted in support of the planning application.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1.1 The proposed development will create a Solar & Green Infrastructure Facility generating approximately 30MWp capacity at land to the west and south of Marsh Green near Exeter. The proposed development includes solar panels which will be erected on frames in a linear fashion across agricultural land that is not 'best and most versatile'.
- 6.1.2 The proposed development consists of approximately 74 hectares of land which consists of:
- c.29 hectares of fenced solar arrays with species-rich grassland, plus associated infrastructure (such as transformers, substations and internal roads both inside and outside the fenced land parcels);
 - c.26 further hectares of enhanced species-rich grassland and stream habitats within the fences;
 - c.19 hectares of dedicated woodland, wet meadow, stream and hedgerow ecological habitat and corridor enhancements and landscape planting; outside the fences yet within the development boundary.
- 6.1.3 The design has followed various national and regional guides:
- The Devon Green Infrastructure Strategy;
 - The Exeter Area and East Devon Green Infrastructure Study;
 - The East Devon District Council Heritage Strategy 2019-2031; and
 - Building with Nature Accreditation: Standards.
- 6.1.4 The Proposed development includes a significant provision of biodiversity enhancements which include butterfly meadows, wet woodlands and planting. The proposed scheme is aiming to be the first of its' kind in the UK which successfully achieves the Building with Nature accreditation with a net Biodiversity Gain projected to be 121%.
- 6.1.5 The development is considerably well-screened and buffered and with the robust comprehensive landscaping plan proposed any potential impacts upon the surrounding countryside or nearby settlements and residences will be minimised.
- 6.1.6 The proposal will contribute significantly to the local and national requirements to generate renewable electricity and would help address the climate emergency declared by East Devon District Council, wherein renewable energy schemes of this scale are now a fundamental part of the Governments energy strategy.
- 6.1.7 The scheme has gone through an extensive design programme led by consultation and technical assessment. The final layout has been selected because it offers a unique balance of land use, energy generation, biodiversity enhancement and environmental mitigation.
- 6.1.8 The development proposal is considered to comply with the relevant planning policy framework, including; development plan policies that serve to protect the character and appearance of the countryside and to support environmentally acceptable renewable energy proposals; and the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework and other Government policy and guidance.

- 6.1.9 Therefore, an absence of demonstrable harm and where the development is sustainable development, planning permission should be granted without delay.



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